

East-west rivalry evident in S. Mtn. freeway advisory group

by **Kerry Fehr-Snyder** - Sept. 2, 2008 06:05 PM
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The South Mountain Citizens Advisory Team has voted to add another east-side resident to the group, potentially stacking the deck for a no-build recommendation on the proposed freeway if the committee splits along east-west lines.

The advisory group voted, 11-5, by a show of hands Thursday to invite a representative of the Foothills Club West homeowners association to join the 28-member group. The group will recommend if the 22-mile, 10-lane South Mountain Freeway should be built. Many of the "no" votes for adding another member came from west-side group members.

The proposed freeway is pitting east-side residents against those on the west side.

Many east-side residents who live in Ahwatukee oppose the freeway because they argue it would bring unwanted traffic, noise and streetlight pollution to the area.

Many residents on the west leg of the freeway favor the freeway as a means to generate economic development and provide better access to the community.

The final build or no-build vote likely will come down to an east vs. west decision, although the ultimate decision lies with ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration. The Maricopa Association of Governments also will decide whether to allocate money to build the \$1.7 billion freeway.

Wes Lines, a member of the Laveen Village Planning Committee and advisory team member, opposed adding a Club West Homeowners Association representative to the freeway advisory group at Thursday's meeting because the group has already been meeting for more than a year. Adding a new member, he argued, could slow the process.

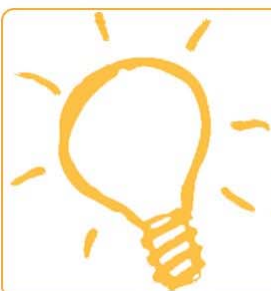
But Brian Smith, an advisory team member and representative of the Calabrea HOA in Ahwatukee Foothills, said he favored adding a Club West representative because that community would be one of the most affected by the freeway.

Advisory team member Sandy Bahr, who represents the Sierra Club, also favored adding the additional member.

"It's not like we're going out and fishing for new members," she said.

Chad Blostone, an advisory team member and representative of the Foothills Homeowners Association, argued during the

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meeting that the group should add someone from the Foothills Club West HOA for two reasons: The team originally had invited someone from the 2,000-home association to participate on the committee, and the community is one of the largest affected by the freeway's alignment along Pecos Road.

The Club West HOA didn't accept the original invitation to join and hasn't been represented for the past year.

Mike Hinz, a real estate agent who has lived in Club West for 14 years, attended Thursday's meeting and said he would be willing to serve on the group's committee.

"Personally, I live far enough away (from the freeway) that it's not going to affect me," Hinz said after the meeting. "But I don't see the case for it. I'm certain that the freeway has no positive impact for Ahwatukee."

The advisory team voted 11-5 to add a Club West representative.

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